



The President's Daily Brief

12 May 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

On Page 1 we comment on yesterday's statements by the Soviet and Chinese governments on US actions in Vietnam

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In South Vietnam, the Communists are continuing intense artillery and ground attacks at An Loc.
(Page 3)

Vang Pao's forces in northern Laos are moving to take advantage of the recent withdrawal of Communist units from the hills southwest of the Plaine des Jarres. (Page 5)

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Egypt (Page 6)

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SOVIET UNION - CHINA - VIETNAM

Yesterday's Soviet Government statement on US actions in Vietnam does not commit Moscow to any particular course of action and can be construed as a play for time. It depicts the US move more as an international crime than as a direct challenge to the USSR. It does not specifically criticize President Nixon. It makes no reference to the summit meeting, implying that no decision to cancel it has yet been taken. Its reiteration of support to North Vietnam is minimal.

In insisting that only negotiations can solve the Vietnamese problem, the Soviet statement repeats none of the specifics of the DRV's terms. Instead, it calls merely for the US to return to the negotiating table in Paris. Premier Kosygin met with Xuan Thuy yesterday

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The stance in Moscow and around the world seems to be a business-as-usual approach

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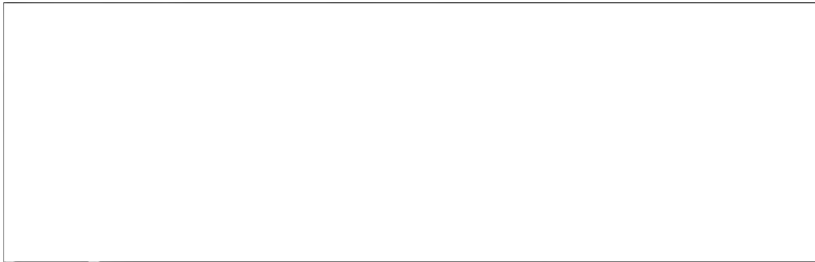
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The Soviet ship Grisha Akopyan, hit during an air raid at Cam Pha early this week, has been abandoned and towed out of the harbor. According to an intercept, one crewman has died of wounds.

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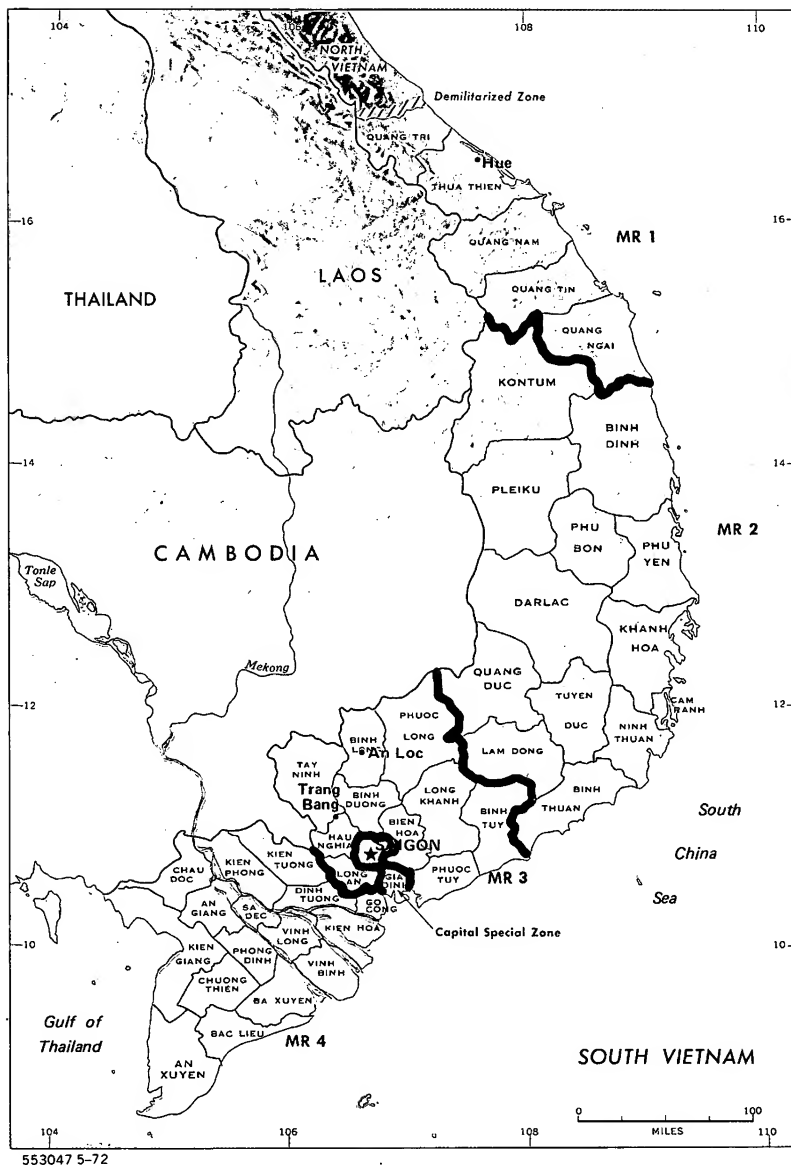
The statement the Chinese Government issued yesterday regarding Vietnam is generally consistent with Peking's restrained and moderate reaction so far to the new phase of the war. Although it condemned the latest US military measures as a "grave step," the statement does not characterize them as a threat, challenge, or provocation to China. The statement also does not attack President Nixon personally.

Nothing in the statement commits Peking to a course of action with respect to the mining of North Vietnamese ports.

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Indeed, in speaking of US naval and air actions, Peking limits itself to saying that they are a provocation "against the people of Vietnam and the people of the whole world." This statement closely parallels the "Commentator" article which appeared earlier in yesterday's edition of People's Daily.

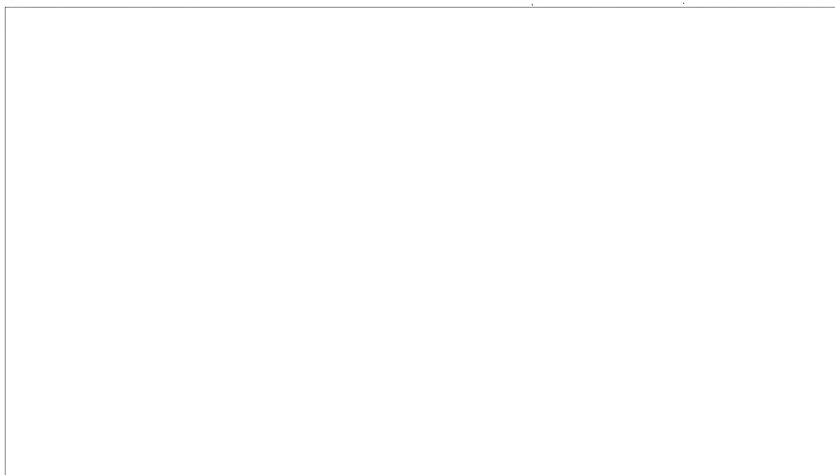
Peking media have been rerunning commentary originating in North Vietnam and North Korea on the President's actions. These articles are considerably stronger than those written by the Chinese themselves, but in reproducing them the Chinese have carefully edited out all unfavorable personal references to President Nixon and to the Nixon Doctrine.



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SOUTH VIETNAM

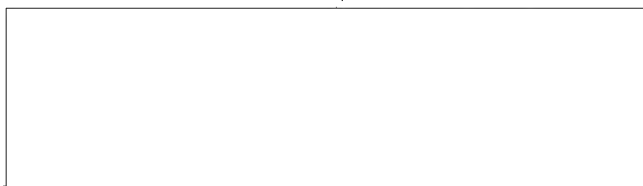
South Vietnamese forces defending An Loc are still holding out today against intense enemy artillery and ground attacks all around the town's perimeter. The Communists launched new tank assaults this morning, and unconfirmed press reports state that some tanks have entered the northern part of An Loc.



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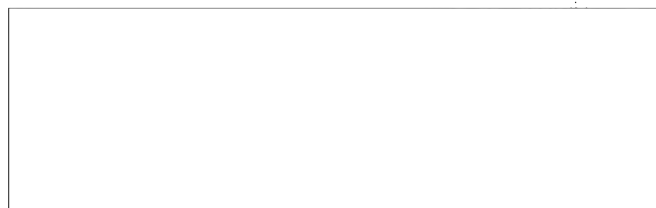
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Northwest of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province, government territorial forces and units from the South Vietnamese 25th Division have recaptured three outposts that the Communists had overrun on 10 May. Fighting continues southwest of Trang Bang District town



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The North Vietnamese continue to shell government positions north and west of Hue, but there have been no major new ground attacks. [REDACTED]

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Quang Ngai Province, at the southern end of MR 1, may be a new major enemy target. Government forces have been stretched thin there following the transfer of troops north to help defend Hue. [REDACTED]

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There is still a considerable reservoir of support for the enemy among the villagers of this province, and many of them are likely to help the North Vietnamese against the government.

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President Thieu has promulgated some stiff control measures to strengthen the national resistance to the Communist offensive. Following his proclamation of martial law on Wednesday, Thieu's government has announced that private homes can be searched at any time and private property requisitioned to meet urgent military needs. High schools and universities are to remain closed for the time being, and the nighttime curfew has been extended throughout the country.

Thieu still wants additional emergency decree power and hopes to get National Assembly approval.

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LAOS

Vang Pao's forces encountered no opposition when they reoccupied Sam Thong, the former refugee center which has been in Communist hands since mid-March. A company of North Vietnamese, however, on 9 May attacked and halted a government task force attempting to move from Pha Dong to Phou Pha Sai, a strategic highpoint overlooking the southern Plaine des Jarres. Another North Vietnamese force has pushed a small irregular contingent from Ban Na, which had been reoccupied without opposition earlier this week.

The North Vietnamese also appear to be preparing to counter government forces in the Tha Tam Bleung area, northeast of Sam Thong. Several enemy trucks were sighted moving toward this area on 9 May, and intercepts disclose that the Communists are keeping the irregulars under close surveillance.

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[REDACTED]

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This year, as in the past, Vang Pao is attempting to recapture during the rainy season as much of the territory between the Plaine des Jarres and Long Tieng as is possible. [REDACTED]

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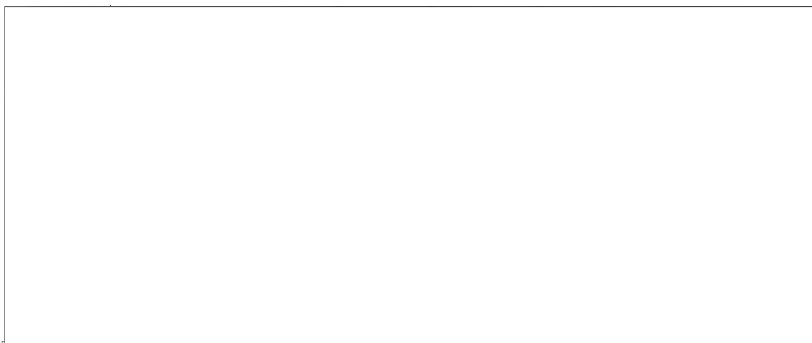
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EGYPT-USSR



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NOTES

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Honduras:

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